

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, July 14. 1691.

*The Questions sent us from Three Ingenious and Eminent Ladies (mention'd in our last Mercury) are the Three following.*

Quest. 1. Whether it be lawful for a Young Lady to pray for a Husband, and if lawful, in what Form?

Answ. He must renounce Humanity, and confess himself a sort of an Aggressor upon the Privileges of Nature, that would not make it as immortal as possible, which is only honourably effected by Marriage, whereby we survive in our Children. Misery without a Friend to bear a part is very afflicting, and Happiness without Communication is tedious, and (as Seneca has observed) sometimes inclines us to make a voluntary Choice of Misery for Novelty. We should be vagrant sort of Animals without Marriage, as if Nature were ashamed of our Converse; We should contribute to the Destruction of States, condemn the Wisdom of the first Institutor, and censure the Edicts of such Common-wealts, who upon very good grounds have discountenanc'd and punish'd Celibacy. Nay, supposing all the Miseries that Marriage-haters suggest should fall upon us, 'tis our own Fault, If with Socrates we don't learn more by a scolding Wife than by all the Precepts of Philosophers. — Now if it be lawful to Marry, 'tis lawful for Ladies to pray for good Husbands, if they find their Inclination, Concerns in the World, or other Motives (which they are to be Judges of) consistent with the Ends of such Society. As to the Form of Prayer required, they may if they please, use the following, if they are not better furnished already.

From a profane Libertine, from one affectedly pious, from a profuse Almoner, from an uncharitable Wretch, from a wavering Religioso, and an injudicious Zealot— Deliver me!

From one of a stately'd Gravity, or of ridiculous Levity; from an ambitious Statesman, from a restless Projector, from one that loves any thing besides me, but what is very just and honourable — Deliver me!

From an extacy'd Poet, from a modern Wit, from a base Coward and a rash Fool, from a Pad and a Pauper — Deliver me!

From a Venus Darling, from a Bacchus Proselyte, from a Travelling Half, from a Domestick Animal; from all Masculine Plagues not yet recounted — Deliver me! — But —

Give me one whose Love has more of Judgment than Passion, who is Master of himself, or at least an indefatigable Scholar in such a Study who has an equal Flame, a parallel Inclination, a Temper and Soul so like mine, that as two Tallies we may appear more perfect by Union.

Give me one of as genteel an Education as a little Expense of time will permit, with an indifferent Fortune, rather independent of the servile Fate of Palaces, and yet one whose Retirement is not so much from the Publick as into himself: One (if possible) above Flattery and Affronts, and yet as careful in preventing the Injury as able to repair it: One, the Beauty of whose Mind exceeds that of his Face, yet not Deformed so as to be distinguishable from others even unto a ridicule.

Give me one that has learnt to live much in a little time, one that is no great Familiar in Converse with the World, nor no little one with himself: One (if two such Happinesses may be granted at one time to our Sex) who with these uncommon Endowments of Mind may (naturally) have a sweet, mild, easie Disposition, or at least One who by his Practice and frequent Habit has made himself so before he is made mine; but as the Master-perfection and chiefest Draught, Let him be truly Virtuous and Pious; that is to say, Let me be truly Happy in my choice.

Quest. 2. A Lady desires to know when she shall have a Husband?

Answ. We read of a waggish Boy, that went to the

Diplock Oracle, with a live Sparrow in his hand, and proposed this Question, Whether the Sparrow was dead or alive? designing, that if the Oracle had answered dead, to have shewn it alive, or if the Oracle had answered alive, to have crush'd it in his hand, and produc'd it dead, but the Oracle answered, *In te situm, &c.* 'Tis in thy Power to produce it either alive or dead. I am sensible the Lady needs not to be instructed in the Application, which if she designs in the Affirmative, I would not have her to neglect her Form of Prayer.

Quest. 3. Whether is it better to live single or to marry?

Answ. This Question is much the same with the former part of the First Question, however we shall add — Marriage is all in the Extreams, nothing moderate isn't; 'tis either accompanied with Hatred and Bitterness, or full of Sweetness and Affection, 'tis either a Paradise or a Hell, but it tis never the latter from its own nature, but from the fault of the Persons who know not how to use it as they ought: Nay we might add, That though generally People are by the Prejudices of Education or otherwise, unfit to make a proper Choice for such an Endearing Society, yet they are generally so happy in't, that they would not leave it though they might be put to their choice; we shall give you a pertinent Instance of a whole City at once. The Emperour Conrade the Third besieged Guedelphus Duke of Bavaria in the City of Wensburg in Germany; the Women perceiving that the Town could not possibly hold out long, petition'd the Emperour that they might depart only with so much as each of them could carry on their backs; which the Emperour condiscended to, expecting they would have loaden themselves with Silver and Gold, &c. But they came all forth with every one her Husband upon her back; whereat the Emperour was so moved that he wept, received the Duke into his Favour, gave all the Men their lives, and extoll'd the Women with deserved Praises. (Camer Oper. Subsisio. 1. Cent. c. 51. p. 228. I think there needs not a greater Instance of something generally taking in Marriage, beyond any other Enjoyment in the Word: But I leave the Ladies to judge, since their own Sex were Parties concern'd herein.

Quest. 4. Within these few days a Swarm of Bees lit upon the Crown and Scepter in Cheapside, no Body knows from whence they came: Pray what Construction do you make of it, and whether it may portend something to come?

Answ. I should be very loath to incur the Title of Superstitious, having already condon'd it, or I could tell you that Bees were always esteem'd by the Ancients to be Hieroglyphicks of Wealth; and accordingly, for that Reason, throughout the World at this time, retain the Epithete of labourious. I might also add, that London, the fam'd Metropolis of England, has her self assum'd the Characteristical Hieroglyphick of Wealth. Viz. A Bee-hive as to be seen amongst the Ruines that are engrav'd round about the Pedestal of the Monument. I am also inform'd, not long since, there was another Swarm of Bees that lighted upon a Sign-post in Cheapside, within three doors of this: As also, that upon Whitsuntide last, an Eagle (the King of Birds) lighted upon the Dragon of St. Mary le Bow in Cheapside, and rested her self for half a day before she left it; all which considered, if there be ever any happy Omens, these mentioned seem to be very fair ones, to wit, Portending very auspicious Times as to Wealth and Power in England, particulariz'd by it's Metropolitan City, which will not have the least share in it. And 'tis to be hoped, that this Summers Action will go a great way towards it, his Present Majesty King William, being himself an Agent, and exposing his own Person in Foreign and strange Countries for the Accomplishment of it, perhaps not unfairly represented by the Royal strange Bird, but we leave the event of these things, and their Interpretation to the Critics of the Age, who perhaps may make more pertinent Comments upon 'em.

Quest. 5. From what Instinct of Nature do the sensible and humble

biuble Plants, now to be seen at Stepney, emit their Operations upon only a bare touch of 'em?

Answ. There are severals sort of Sensitive Plants and Herbs, which occur in Reading, or Travelling; the Mary-Gold and Tulip open and shut as the Sun arises and sets. The Lotus in Euphrates (according to Pliny) hides it self under the Water when the Sun sets, and discovers it self again when the Sun arises, the Flowers of the Arbor tristis, in the East-Indies, have the Nature of the Mary-Gold. In the Island of Cimbobon in Borzo in Oriental Asia, (according to Pigafetta,) the Leaves of a certain Tree, after they are fallen sometime on the Earth do vivisit walk upon four sharp and short Feet; he adds, that he kept one of them for eight Days, which when touched woud move, and as he thought, liv'd only upoa Air. In Zalbolva, a part of Tartary, the Inhabitants sow a Grain like Melon-Seed, sowing that it is not quite so long, from which issues a Plant about five Spans high, like a Lamb, with Ears, Feet, Hooves, and covered with a Hairy Skin, its Flesh is sweet, and like that of Crevishes, it bleeds when wounded, and is much desired by the Wolves: It adheres to the Earth by the Navel, and lives only so long as there's Grass about it; the Mussulmans wear the Skin of it on their Breasts and Heads. In the French Kings Gardens, in the Fauxburg, there are three sorts of Sensitive Plants, which being touch'd, flag, and return not to their place till warm'd by the Sun. Garsias ab horto, and Theophrastus, in his Fourth Book of Plants, mention some that are in such manner Sensitive. Apollidorus mentions an Herb called Aesciophore, or Chast Herb which shuns the Hand of any that offers to touch it. The Portugals have an herb leaf'd like our Tamerisk, which touch'd never so little languishes: The Philosopher of Malabar, being unable to find the Cause, went mad. Nicholas Conti mentions a Tree in the East Indies, between the Cities of Bisnigar and Malepur, three Yards high, call'd Arbor Pudica, or the Modest Tree, which retracts its Branches when any Man or Beast approaches it. Some Philosophers upon these Instances, which are more or less Sensible, conclude, that all Plants whatever, are sensible in some Degree, though not perceptible to our Senses, and that Vegetation and Senecte are the Operations, but of one Soul. They have the Distinction of Sexes, as appears in the Cypress, Hemp, Palm, &c. which bear not Fruit, unless planted near the Male, they seem to respite, (as 'tis reasonably suppos'd) encreasing best in the open Air, and by the Root, which is their Mouth, they seem to taste, discerning the Difference in Soils, grow better or worse, according as they like their Feeding. There is the same Uniformity betwixt Animals and Plants, in that both die, have their Nutrition, Augmentation, and Generation: if Animals be Salacious in their proper Seasons, Plants have their times for being in Sap. In a word, they seem only to want Local Motion, which some have, as in Scotland, where according to Anthony Pigafetta, there is a Tree leav'd like our Mulberry, the leaves whereof have two little feet, and will run away when touch'd; but if after it cannot be granted, that the Reason of this Sensation is not naturally from an internal, but some external Cause, then the Reason of such fading, moving, &c. may be from an Antipathy betwixt them and Mankind, as an Eagles Feathers destroy the Doves, and the strings made of Sheeps Gutts break and spoil when put amongst the strings that are made of a Wolfs Gutts; or if this Reason may be defective, we add, that possible, that these Sensible Plants are of a more pure and subtil Contexture; and therefore more easily affected with the Motion, Heat, Cold, &c. of any thing coming near them.

Quest. 6. What's the meaning of the Word Culprit?

Answ. 'Tis a Term in Law, appropriated to Criminals, perhaps a Compound of Culpa paratus, or one made ready by his Crime for Trial or Punishment.

Quest. 7. It so happened, that a Man having a Wife several Tears, but as I remember no Children by her; at last he fell in Love with his Maid, being somewhat Handsome, whom he importun'd and beset very hard to fulfil his desires, which at last she seemingly consented to, by appointing both the Time and Place, which was a dark Cellar. In the mean time the honest Maid acquaints her Mistress with the whole design, who could not but commend her Honesty, Wit, and Justice, and bid her about the prefix'd time to be out of the way, and she would supply her room in the dark; and accordingly did,

managing the Imposition with that cunning, that her Husband perceiv'd not his Mistake, but being more vigorous than ordinarily, by the strength of Fancy he got his Wife with Child of two Boys at the same time: Pray resolve me, whether the Children were Bastards or not?

Answ. The Man certainly committed Adultery with his own wife, all the Circumstances and Qualifications that make up an Adulterous Act being joyned together on his part. But because a Man cannot beget a man without a Woman, it follows that the Children were partly his, and partly his honest Wifes: And therefore, so far as the Man was so concern'd in their Generation, so far only they were Bastards, wholly as to his intentionality, and partly as to his Potentiality of an Act.

Quest. 8. What is the Reason that the Frenchman is so much incens'd with the Lye?

Answ. They suppose themselves to be the most civiliz'd Nation in the World, as may be seen by their Writings; but I wonder not that 'tis an affront to them, or any body else, that has the least Sense of Honour and Reputation. This Vice destroys the ends of Society and Converse, which are founded upon Speech, the minds Interpreter; but if there be no Assurance of this, the Humane Society is destroy'd: Wherefore, to be thought or call'd a Lyer, is the worst Character and Term that can be fixed upon a Rational Being; therefore no wonder at all that any one bears the Affront so resentingly.

Quest. 9. Whether is there any such thing as the Salamander, and will it, as vulgarly reported, live in the Fire?

Answ. Observe most of these Vulgar Reports and Traditions, and you'll find some grounds or other, which gave Occasion for them, though they generally make more on't than there really is: So here —— there is something of Truth in the Salamander's living in the Fire, though perhaps not by half so much as is generally reported. Take the most Authentick Account we can give you thereof from the Transactions of the Royal Society, Vol. 1. p. 377. Where they tell us, that one Signior Corvino, an Italian, brought one of those Creatures from the Indies, and made an Experiment Publickly upon it at Rome, casting it upon hot burning Coals, at which it immediately swell'd and Vomitted a black Substance on the nearest Coals, which put them out; When new ones were put in their rooms, he repeated the same Experiment, and saved himself thereby from the Force of the Fire by the space of two hours: But when new coals apply'd the third time, the Poor Creatures stock was spent, his Engine would play no longer, and he ev'n fairly gave up the Ghost, and was burnt to Death.

Quest. 10. Is there any such Creature as the Basilisk, and whether is it true that it kills with its Look, where it sees first, and dies if a Man first sees it?

Answ. There's no great heed to be given to what Old Authors tell us on this particular, though here, as tis before said, we verily believe that Truth and Falshood are mingled together. There are Serpents, as Naturalists inform us, which generally go erect, and have something like a Crown upon their Heads. There are also to this day some Serpents of so subtil a Poyson, that they kill with their very Breaths, as we receive it from good Hands in the modern Descriptions of Ethiopia and other parts of Africk.

Now supposing any such Serpents, as we see no Reason to doubt the Authority of the Relaters, it's certain that if they first discover a Man, when near enough to breathe on him, he's dead —— if the Man first sees the Serpent, undoubtedly he'll do his best to kill him, if he can't escape him —— and this is the furthest Probability we can reach to in this matter.

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In this Supplement, and also in our First Volume is Answered many of the Ingenious Questions lately sent us, and those about Perjury, Pump-water, and others shall be Answer'd at the End of our second Volume.